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PUBLIC STATEMENT OF BOB FULKERSON

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1 MR. FULKERSON: Good evening. Sorry to have to turn my back to everybody. In the other hearings, I know the podium has been set up differently so that speakers didn't have to have their back to the audience. I think this is an unfortunate setup.

In any case, my name is Bob Fulkerson, and I am the director of Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada. I'm a fifth generation Nevadan. I'm on the board of the Nevada Wilderness Project. I'm also speaking on their behalf.

2 I think it's really important, particularly I think it is great to see the young folks here tonight, that we think about history and the historical perspective of this and of Nevada's experience with being guinea pigs for nuclear experiments that the federal government wants to play around with.

The last time was in the 50's and 60's when the government came and said, don't worry about the radioactive fallout that's falling over your homes and your farms and your gardens and your windshields. Just wipe it off and go indoors. They told our people this knowing full well that they knew there was a problem with radioactive fallout.

Your predecessors at the Department of Energy and the Atomic Energy Commission have already been pronounced guilty by Judge Bruce Jenkins in the landmark Downwinders case in 1986 in which over 1600 Utahans, Nevadans and Arizonans were killed as a result of the last federal experiment with things nuclear. And obviously, thousands more were impacted and were killed, and many more will be hurt because of genetic problems.

But we just have a very bitter and painful experience with this program.

And so you have to understand why we think it's extremely unfair, unjust, to be asked to foist this latest burden, particularly since in Nevada we don't get -- we don't generate a lot of nuclear power. States in the East where 80 percent of this waste will come from built, used, benefited from these nuclear power plants for the last 50 years knowing full well there was a problem with nuclear waste

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2 building up, and now for their nuclear power utilities which
influenced the passage of the Nuclear Waste Policy Act by their
campaign contributions, and which has influenced this process ever
step of the way, which is why it's based on political expedience and
not technical feasibility or science, for them to say we have solved
this problem because we passed some laws and we're just going to dump
it on Nevada, that just doesn't wash.

3 And I think it's also really important that we look at
the failure of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty recently in Congress,
and so that we in Nevada are faced with a very high likelihood of
simultaneous high level radioactive waste dumping right here and then
right next to it underground nuclear weapons testing explosions.

That's not contemplated in this EIS, but in the 1984
environmental assessment of Yucca Mountain, they said that workers
would not be allowed in the underground repository when weapons tests
were going on for safety reasons.

4 And that also brings us to the earthquake question. Last
month only a short distance from Yucca Mountain in the Mojave Desert,
a 7.0 earthquake forced a train to jump from its tracks and some high
rise buildings were evacuated in Las Vegas, even though the earthquake
occurred about 150 miles away.

Now the earthquake specifications for Yucca Mountain are
still being talked about. And that brings us to the point of
standards.

5 Every time the Nuclear Waste Policy Act set up
guidelines, set up certain standards, went out and did a national
search, tried to find sites that would fit those standards, but
because of the political game that was played, they focused on Yucca
Mountain.

The standards went out the window. Ground water travel
time. How long it would take radioactive water to reach -- to
trickle through and hit the accessible environment. There was a
pretty strong standard on that. That got thrown out the window
because Yucca Mountain wouldn't make it.

Carbon 14 releases. Yucca Mountain wouldn't make it. It
got thrown out the window.

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Radiation standards are still being set. In fact, there is legislation that comes up every year before Congress to yank radiation standards from the Environmental Protection Agency and give it to the much more nuclear friendly Nuclear Regulatory Commission, because of the political expedience, because Yucca Mountain doesn't -- is not a good site scientifically or technically. So they have to continue to lower those standards in order to make it fit the bill.

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And finally, there's the issue of transporting nuclear waste around the clock for some 30 years through 43 states past 30 tribal jurisdictions and past 53 million people. And according to your best experts, it's going to be safe.

And we remember no technological experiment or technological wonder from the Titanic to the Apollo moon rockets, the space shuttle was pronounced safe by the experts and had some very dire consequences. I think when it comes with technological experiments and with things high tech in general, we tend to skate on very thin ice.

And I think we can be guilty of hubris and what happens in our western civilization when we go out and say we know better, we know better than God does. We get struck down. And so beware of making these big pronouncements that this thing is going to be safe.

Because we're human, we're bound to make mistakes, and it's happened before, and it's going to happen again.

How are we doing on time?

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MR. LAWSON: You are a little over.

MR. FULKERSON: Oh, shoot. Anyway, once we get the site, once we get to Yucca Mountain, even though it's never been done before on this large scale, and we built this big big repository, the dump is still planned to leak. That's a really important thing to remember, that it will leak over time. It's planned to leak.

In fact -- but in a safe way, of course. Really important to note that out of 127 sites that the Department of Energy manages for radioactive materials, 124 of them leak radiation into the environment. 124 out of 127 failures. Yet you're saying that Yucca Mountain is going to be safe for 10,000 years.

These sites have only been around for about 50 years.

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But you are saying that 124 out of 127 don't work, but you're saying that this one, world's first high level radioactive waste dump is not going to leak, is going to be fine for 10,000 years. Again, it just doesn't wash.

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I just want to close by saying that we have been in the cross hairs in Nevada for 25 years. Our motto may be all for our country, but sacrificing more of our water, our land, our economy, and most importantly, our people for this politically expedient program is not what we had in mind.

We stand in support with the Treaty of Ruby Valley and the Western Shoshone Nation in saying dump your plan, not your waste here. Thanks.

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